

Mexican Gray Wolf Reintroduction

Great Old Broads for Wilderness

What role do wolves play in their ecosystems?

Large predators including wolves benefit natural ecosystems, and their loss impoverishes those ecosystems. In Yellowstone National Park, for example, wolf reintroduction in 1995 led elk to avoid low-visibility streamsides, with steep embankments, and as a result, cottonwoods that the elk had previously browsed down as saplings grew into large trees, providing habitat for songbirds, food for beavers, and additional habitat for fish that thrive in the beaver ponds that did not exist before the wolves were reintroduced. In Grand Teton National Park, wolves' return led to pronghorn numbers increasing, because the wolves control coyotes which actively hunt pronghorn fawns.

Why is the Mexican gray wolf important?

Mexican wolves are a genetically unique subspecies that is smaller than other gray wolves and evolved to take advantage of the arid ecosystems of Mexico and the Southwest. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service exterminated all wolves in the western United States between 1915 and 1945, and after 1950 began wolf poisoning in Mexico as well. Only seven Mexican wolves survived, were bred in captivity, and their progeny reintroduced to Arizona and New Mexico beginning in 1998.

Are losses of livestock to wolves compensated?

Yes. Stock owners have received compensation under a variety of public and private sources for confirmed wolf kills, including from Defenders of Wildlife until last year, and after that from federal Farm Bill funds and a federally and privately-funded "interdiction program" run by a local stakeholder group.

How does wolf management correlate with depredations?

From 1999 through 2007, federal predator-control agents shot 11 wolves and trapped dozens (including 18 that died as a result of capture). During the heyday of this persecution from 2003 to 2007, depredations steadily increased. They have steadily decreased since depredation-related removals ended in 2008. Proactive, non-injurious measures to protect stock, such as New Mexico Game and Fish Department until recently undertook, and conscientious husbandry, work much better than removing wolves.

How popular are wolves with the public in New Mexico?

A statewide, independent public opinion survey of 507 registered New Mexico voters in 2008, conducted by Research & Polling, found that 69% of New Mexico voters either *strongly support* (37%) or *somewhat support* (32%) the reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf into the Gila and Apache National Forests. Detailed report on the survey at: <http://www.mexicanwolves.org/pdf/Reading18WolfSurveyNM.pdf>